Sarah Sweetland

Foundations of College Writing

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Student Athletes vs. Non-Athletes Schedules and Social Lives

**Problem**

When it comes to the college experience, there is no doubt that everyone’s is different, some people focus on their academics while others focus more on the social aspect. Student athletes and non-athletes have such a big difference in their school lives that I was to focus on these groups in this paper. These types of students have different schedules and events that go on in their everyday life that will affect their grades and experiences at school. There are so many different types of experiences at college that I am curious as to exactly what makes their experience so different. In what ways do these different kinds of students manage their time? How do student athletes and non-athletes feel about their social lives at school? These are only a couple of questions that I was curious about while looking into the differences in student athletes and non-athletes college experience.

**Background**

One of the first articles I found examines the differences of cultures in student athletes and non-athletes. This article discusses the difference between the grades and culture of student athletes and non-athletes. Research was conducted to explore whether or not there was a difference in the GPA of students and what type of learning environment was needed to maintain these GPAs. This study shows that there are outside factors in a student’s school life such as the study environment and the support given from peers that has a significant impact on the grades they maintain.

The next article I found discusses the difference in the student athletes and non-athletes social lives and emotions. In this study they surveyed and tested the students to compare their level of depression, self-esteem, and social connectedness. The results showed that student athletes had a significantly higher level of self-esteem and social connectedness, as well as a lower level of depression than non-athletes. This was connected to the amount of exercise the student was getting on a day to day basis. Exercise is good for the brain and body. Student athletes experiences higher levels of these various feelings so therefore one factor that makes a difference in their experience is their exercise, and that contributes to their well-being which makes the college experience more pleasurable.

Another article I found also discusses differences in student athlete and non-athlete college experience and some social influences that may affect a student athlete’s willingness to drink alcohol. This article states “among groups such as sports teams…injunctive norms are very important as they represent socially approved behavior for maintaining group identity”. This means that there are expectancies that come from sports teams that may influence a student athlete to drink. I found it interesting to read about sports teammates having an influence on each other to drink alcohol. It could be because the student’s teammates and social groups are causing peer pressure for other student athletes. Or it could be because student athletes are more disciplined and need opportunities to blow off steam and manage stress. It made me wonder if student athletes here at Bloomsburg felt peer pressure from their teammates to go out and drink.

**Method**

To find answers to my questions, I recorded some time diaries of both athletes and non-athletes to see the difference in their schedules and college life. These time diaries regard their schedule during the school week. I asked them questions such as: 1) What time do you go to bed? 2) What do you spend most of your time doing? 3) How much free time do you get on an average school day? I used these questions to see what the differences between student athletes and non-athletes actually were. I wanted to see if there was a direct correlation to being an athlete or non-athlete and the grades they received as a student, or the social life they had.

**Findings**

Time Diaries:

**Female College Athlete:**

9:00a.m-10:15am – class

10:15a.m-11am – eat breakfast/homework

11:15am-12:30pm – class

12:30pm-1:45pm – homework

2:00pm-3:15pm – class

3:15pm-4:00pm – relax/homework

4:00pm-7:00pm – practice

7:00pm-8:00pm – dinner

8:00pm-10:30pm – homework

10:30pm-7:00am – sleep

7:00am-8:30am – shower/get ready for class

8:30am-9:00am – go to class

**Female College Non-Athlete:**

8:00am-8:50am – class

8:50am-9:30am – relax

9:30am-10:00am – go to class

10:00am-10:50am – class

10:50am-12:00pm – relax/homework

12:15pm-12:50pm – class

12:50pm-2:00pm – homework

2:00pm-3:00pm – lunch

3:00pm-7:00pm – hang out with friends/homework

7:00pm-8:00pm – dinner

8:00pm-9:00pm – finish homework

9:00pm-10:45pm – relax

10:45pm-6:30am – sleep

6:30am-7:30am – shower/get ready for class

7:30am-8:00am – go to class

I noticed some patterns in the time diaries between the student athletes and non-athletes. It seemed that both the student athletes and non-athletes found time for homework and relaxation. However it seemed that the student athlete’s time was shorter and packed in a tighter schedule. The non-athlete even had some extra time to hang out with their friends. This could lead to student athletes being more stressed. Like my third article stated, being stressed could lead to student athlete’s willingness to drink alcohol.

Interviews:

**Female College Athlete:**  
Why did you decide to come to college?  
To get a good education in hopes to get a good job when graduated  
  
Why did you choose Bloomsburg?  
Good program, good swim team  
  
What’s your major and why?  
Early childhood education and special education. Wants to work with special needs kids  
  
How many hours a day do you do homework?  
Around 2 hours  
  
Do you play sport? What?  
Swim team  
  
If so how many hours a day do you practice?  
3 hour practices everyday

The amount of practice she has everyday could make her more tired and affect how well she does in her classes.  
  
Are you in any clubs? If so what?  
No time for clubs  
  
How many hours of sleep do you get on a school night?  
Around 9  
  
What time do you go to bed?  
11pm

The time she goes to bed could be determined by how late she finishes her homework because having practice during the day took time away from her studies.  
  
Do you have to maintain a certain GPA?  
Yes 3.0  
  
How much free time do you have a day?   
Not much, depends on homework, around 4 hours

What do you spend most of your free time doing?

Usually at practice, class, or doing homework

How do you feel about your social life at school?

Playing a sport has helped me make friends, sometimes I feel pressure to go out every weekend with them even if I don’t want to go out

Feeling pressure to do things she doesn’t want to do because of her teammates could be an influence from the culture and social groups student athletes have.

**Female College Non-Athlete:**  
Why did you decide to come to college?  
To get a good job when they’re older  
  
Why did you choose Bloomsburg?  
Great program, connections for internships  
  
What’s your major and why?  
Business, wants to own their own business  
  
How many hours a day do you do homework?  
Around 4  
  
Do you play sport? What?  
No  
  
If so how many hours a day do you practice?  
None   
  
Are you in any clubs? If so what?  
Walk for wishes foundation  
  
How many hours of sleep do you get on a school night?  
Around 10  
  
What time do you go to bed?   
10pm  
  
Do you have to maintain a certain GPA?  
No

Not needing to maintain a certain GPA for a sports team or for their major can be a huge relief of stress that other students may have to deal with.  
  
How much free time do you have a day?   
A lot, done classes around 1 have the rest of the day to do homework and get stuff done

How do you feel about your social life at school?

At first it was hard to make friends, but now I’m very happy with the friends I’ve made and I feel like I get to see them everyday

**Male College Athlete:**

Why did you decide to come to college?

I decided that going to college would help me in the long run with my future

Why did you choose Bloomsburg?

It felt like home, and has a good football team

What’s your major and why?

Business, because it has always interested me and I feel like it has the most job opportunities

How many hours a day do you do homework?

Around 3 hours

Do you play sport? What?

Football

If so how many hours a day do you practice?

3 hour practices everyday

Are you in any clubs? If so what?

No clubs

How many hours of sleep do you get on a school night?

Around 7

What time do you go to bed?

Around 12pm if I finished all my homework

Do you have to maintain a certain GPA?

Yes 3.0

How much free time do you have a day?

Not much, depends on homework and practice, around 4 hours

How do you feel about your social life at school?

I love my social life, I’ve met so many people through football, if they aren’t on the team I don’t see them much during the week but on the weekend I get to see them

**Male College Non-Athlete:**

Why did you decide to come to college?

To get a good job when I’m older and have a successful career

Why did you choose Bloomsburg?

Great program, connections for internships

What’s your major and why?

Criminal Justice, I have always been interested in working with the law

How many hours a day do you do homework?

Around 4

Do you play sport? What?

No

If so how many hours a day do you practice?

None

Are you in any clubs? If so what?

Not currently in any clubs at the moment

Saying that he isn’t in any clubs at the moment gives me the impression that he is keeping his mind open, and isn’t objected to joining a club at any point in time. Having extra free time from not having mandatory practices definitely helps.

How many hours of sleep do you get on a school night?

Around 10

What time do you go to bed?

10pm if I’m done my homework

Do you have to maintain a certain GPA?

No

How much free time do you have a day?

A lot, done classes around 3 have the rest of the day to do homework and study

How do you feel about your social life at school?

I have met a great group of friends here and am very happy to have found them and see most of them everyday

From looking at the data that I have collected from the time diaries there was not a significant difference in their days. The biggest difference I noticed was that the non-athlete seemed to have a little more free time to hang out with their friends and get homework done. While the student athlete seemed to have a bit more of a cramped schedule, they seem to have to manage their time more critically than the non-athlete student. It seems that student athletes are learning how to manage time efficiently in order to make the most out of their day.

When looking at the interviews I noticed that gender didn’t seem to affect the students too much; the main difference applied to whether or not the student was an athlete. The student athletes I interviewed seemed to have less time to get their homework done or join clubs. Both of the non-athletes that I interviewed noted that after their classes are over they don’t feel rushed to get their homework done. They may have the same amount of work or even more to get done than a student athlete, but because they don’t have mandatory practice every day they have more time to do said homework.

When I asked the students about their social lives at school, I made a connection to the fact that the non-athlete students both commented that if they want to they can find time to see their friends every day. The student athletes had a little less time to hang out with their friends. I also took noticed of the comment by the one student athlete about feeling pressure to go out with her teammates on the weekends. This comment made me curious as to whether or not being on a sports team with your friends made a difference in how you felt about going out with them. Being around your team every day at practice could increase the amount of peer pressure one would receive. The need student have to feel like they fit in and are liked by their teammates may also be reason student athletes feel the need to go out with them on the weekends. It was nice to see that both student athletes and non-athletes seemed to be happy with their social lives. This shows that you don’t have to be on a sports team in order to make friends and have a good college experience.

**Conclusion**

Based on the data I have found I have come to the conclusion that the college experience is not based on whether or not you join a sports team. The college experience can be whatever you make it be. I noticed a difference in the schedules of students who did and didn’t play sports. Despite these differences socially both groups of students seemed to be happy with their college lives. However studies showed me that the depression, self-esteem, and social connectedness were different. Student athletes had a significantly higher level of self-esteem and social connectedness and a lower level of depression. Studies showed that the level of exercise a student got was connected to these results. Getting exercise doesn’t necessarily mean you have to join a sports team; any way of staying active can help student’s health and how they feel. Student athletes and non-athletes may have different experiences in their college life, but one is not better than the other. In order to maintain the same experiences in college, non-athletes may need to find a way to have the same experience in time management as student athletes. Also research needs to be done to figure out if the social expectation of student athletes and non-athletes, and their drinking habits has anything to do with their social groups and the amount of time they spend together. More studies and surveys could be conduct along with interviews from both student athletes and non-athletes.

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[Sweetland Revision Sheet.doc](file:///C:\Users\Sarah\Documents\Sweetland%20Revision%20Sheet.doc)